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# "THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA"

## AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HONORABLE HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND


PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ON


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DAY, OCTOBER NINETEEN  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FOUR

AT THE

LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION  
ST. LOUIS, MO.

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**Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia**

**HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND**

President

**HENRY L. WEST**

**JOHN BIDDLE**

Major, Corps of Engineers, United States Army

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On the nineteenth of October, nineteen hundred and four, District of Columbia Day was celebrated at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, under the direction of the Committee of Arrangements appointed by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, and the Committee of the Washington Board of Trade.\* The Commissioners, accompanied by members of the Committees, met the President and other officials of the Exposition and the members of the United States Commission and of the United States Government Board, at the Administration Building, at ten o'clock in the morning, and in company with those gentlemen were escorted by Major-General John C. Bates, United States Army, and a procession representing the Army and Navy, the Phillipine Constabulary, and the Jefferson Guards, headed by the United States Marine Band, through the principal avenues of the grounds, to the United States Government Building, which had been appointed as their headquarters for the day. After reviewing the procession in company with the officials of the Exposition, the representatives of the United States Government, and General John C. Bates, the Commissioners held a reception in the center of the Government Building, from eleven to twelve o'clock, which was largely attended by citizens from all over the United States, including a large number from the District of Columbia. During this reception the Marine Band furnished a program of music. At two o'clock exercises were held in the hall of the Missouri State Building, offered for the purpose by the Missouri State Commission, which was filled with people throughout the program. Honorable John W. Douglass, Chairman of the Committee of Arrange-

\*For account of exercises see 14th Annual Report, Washington Board of Trade.

ments, presided, and addresses were made by Honorable David R. Francis, President of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition; Honorable Henry B. F. Macfarland, President of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia; Honorable Williams C. Fox, representing the United States Government Board. The Marine Band rendered a number of selections. Mr. Macfarland's address follows:

## "THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA"

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We are here to congratulate the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and to celebrate the National Capital. They are linked together by the memory of Thomas Jefferson, the first President who served a full term in the White House, where his greatest achievement was the peaceful acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, doubling the domain of the United States for fifteen million dollars.

Thomas Jefferson had almost as much to do with the creation of the National Capital as with the Louisiana Purchase; he was second only to George Washington in that work. In the long and bitter struggle in Congress over the selection of a site for the Federal District, for which the Constitution had provided, after the unrequited and indignant soldiers of the Revolution had frightened Congress from Philadelphia to Princeton in 1783, and convinced it that the National Government must control the National Capital, it was Thomas Jefferson who, at his own dinner table, settled the matter and placed the National Capital on the Potomac. Afterwards he regretted that he had allowed Alexander Hamilton that night to induce him to influence the Virginia members to agree to vote for the assumption of the State revolutionary-war debts by the National Government to please the North, in exchange for Northern votes for the Potomac rather than the Delaware site to please the South. He had builded better than he knew in this, as afterwards in the Louisiana Purchase, yet he deserves the credit of the results.

Having thus brought to George Washington power to place the Federal District on the Potomac, Jefferson aided him in placing it just where it is and in preparing it for its future uses. No other public man, except Madison, took anything like the same interest taken by Washington, who looked upon the establishment of a permanent seat for the Government of the United States, to be controlled by it exclusively of the States, as one of the most important acts of his career. To Washington it was a symbol of perpetual union; of that nation which he foresaw made up of indistructible states indissolubly united, when other men were wondering how soon and for what reasons the States would break the invisible bonds of their alliance. Jefferson and Madison did not view it quite in the same way, but they freely gave their advice and assistance to the greater Virginian.

Planning for a nation of illimitable expansion and duration, with the spiritual vision of the seer and the scientific skill of the surveyor, George Washington fixed upon the most strategic and beautiful site in all the hundred-mile stretch of the Potomac where he was to choose. He proceeded to lay out a city whose magnificent proportions were in startling contrast with the comparatively small area, population, and wealth of the country and the weakness and poverty of the Government. It deserved all the ridicule poured upon it if the United States were not to remain united or if they were not to grow in territory and power. But it was only those who could see nothing but that day of small things that laughed at Washington's great plans for a great future. Jefferson, perhaps with some unconscious prescience of his own great expansion of the national territory, saw nothing ridiculous in it, but, on the contrary, contributed his practical wisdom and all that he had learned in cities abroad to make the plans more splendid.

No capital in the world at that time could compare with the capital that Washington planned, and all of them to-

gether furnished only suggestions. It is another proof of his extraordinary genius that a hundred years afterwards a commission of experts, the best that could be found in our country, after viewing all the great capitals of the world could suggest no improvement upon the old plan of Washington. And the plan, it must always be remembered, was Washington's, although he had the advice of Jefferson and Madison and utilized the technical skill of L'Enfant and Ellicott. Unfortunately, Washington did not live to see the National Government at work in the National Capital, for death carried him off untimely the year before President Adams removed it from Philadelphia to Washington. But he had set the boundaries of the ten miles square in a diamond-shape, resting on the southern end of his market-town of Alexandria. He had actually acquired over one-half of the land of the future City of Washington free of cost to the Government on the argument to the nineteen original proprietors that what they kept would be greatly increased in value. He had on the map marked out the unparalleled avenues, streets and parks of the new Capital and, with money derived from the sale of part of the Government lots and from loans made by Virginia and Maryland, had built the President's House, the old Capitol and other buildings for the National Government. Every acre of it was sacred to his name. No wonder that by universal voice it was named the City of Washington.

When President Jefferson came to his simple inauguration on the fourth of March, 1801, he took up again his interest in the National Capital, which never flagged during the eight years of his service. He showed it in many ways, as diverse, for example, as the planting of Lombardy poplars down Pennsylvania Avenue and the acceptance of the Presidency of the Board of Education of Washington. It was, of course, in the President's House, which was not called the White House until in 1814 it was painted very white to

cover the marks of its burning by the British, that Jefferson began, directed and consummated all the negotiations with France and Spain and with our own Congress, which ended in the extension of the American sovereignty over the Louisiana Territory, the first great step in the westward march of the great republic.

It is most fitting that the representatives of the National Capital, with all its associations with Jefferson, should come to this unequalled exposition in commemoration of his unique and far-reaching deed, and join with the States which he knew, and with the States of which he never dreamed, to honor his memory.

When Jefferson became President in 1801 the National Capital looked very much as it did when ten years before Washington surveyed the unbroken forest site from Georgetown Heights. The two older cities of the Federal District, Georgetown in the northwest and Alexandria in the southwest, were unchanged, for the plans of Washington covered only the Federal city, and nothing had been done under those plans beyond opening Pennsylvania Avenue and portions of a very few other streets, cutting down many noble trees, and erecting the few Federal buildings; speculators had built a few private structures for hotels and boarding houses. The Federal city from the hills surrounding the great, beautiful amphitheater of the District, with the Potomac River glistening through it, was otherwise almost as wild as when Captain John Smith first visited it. The National Government had done nothing for the National Capital, because it had nothing to do with. It was practically penniless. It came to the Federal District on the gifts of the original proprietors of the site of Washington and on the loans from Virginia and Maryland. There is a curious delusion in many quarters that the National Government supports the expense of the National Capital, and has always done so, and ignorant people sometimes say the inhabitants

of the District of Columbia are and always have been mendicants with respect to the National Government. Almost the reverse is the case. The National Government was literally a mendicant when it came to the District, and the inhabitants furnished even the buildings in which it did its work. And then for seventy-eight years the National Government allowed, and indeed required, the comparatively few people paying taxes in the District to carry practically the whole burden of municipal expenditure. The making of the National Capital, which ought to have been from the beginning the task of all the people of the United States, was at the beginning imposed upon the few residents of the District, and its maintenance, which ought to have been largely the work of the whole country, was for more than three-quarters of a century practically exacted of the people who had the fortune to live in the National Capital. At first the National Government, still almost experimental, burdened with the revolutionary debt, and without money, representing a country drained by war and with resources undeveloped, could do nothing else. But there is no excuse for the neglect of after years. Presidents, Senators and Representatives repeatedly acknowledged the national obligation to the National Capital and acknowledged the neglect of it. Official reports praised the public spirit of the District residents, deplored the staggering effect of their municipal burdens, and reproached Congress, but beyond adding to the buildings which had been given to it in 1800, or erecting new ones for its use, and providing an aqueduct to bring water for its needs, the National Government did practically nothing for the National Capital. The municipal improvements had to be made and the municipal services had to be maintained by the people who lived in Washington. The National Government, of course, did nothing in Georgetown or in Alexandria, and those municipalities had to bear all their expenses. By 1846 Alexandria had become

so dissatisfied that it brought about the retrocession to Virginia of the territory she had given for the District, leaving only the seventy square miles of land and water ceded by Maryland, including the whole breadth of the Potomac.

The chief explanation of the extraordinary treatment given the National Capital by the National Government through so many years, is that it was not regarded as settled beyond possibility of change that the seat of government would remain in the District of Columbia. When it was established it was about the center of population of the United States, stretching then in a thin line from Maine to Georgia. But when Jefferson suddenly doubled the area of the United States, and the pioneer hosts poured over the Alleghanies to the winning of the West, a movement began for the removal of the National Capital to the West, where the center of population was soon to be. Even in 1814, when the British burned the White House and the Capitol, this movement had become so strong that the people of Washington, out of their comparative poverty, contributed largely to provide temporary quarters for the Government, lest, in the excitement of the hour, and under the new argument that the Capital was too near the coast to be safe from foreign attack at any time, the National Government might betake itself to the interior. As the population of the western country increased the difficulty of communication with the Federal District on the extreme eastern edge of the country became more and more practical and impressive. If it had not been for the development of the railroad and the telegraph the argument arising from this difficulty might have become irresistible.

As it was, the advocates of the removal of the Capital from Washington westward, St. Louis being most popular with them, were hopeful until after the civil war had ended forever any serious consideration of the proposition. In the fires of that great conflict, when the matchless armies of the



North and South fought over Washington as the symbol of victory, the National Government was welded to that home beyond the power of anyone to remove it. It was not so much the cost of the national buildings as it was the cost of the national war, especially in the best blood of the country, that made all talk of removal ridiculous after 1865, when the National Capital had become sacred through mighty sacrifices.

All the while the people of Washington did their duty, and more than their duty, in upbuilding and maintaining the nation's city. They taxed themselves to the utmost, they went into debt to meet the inordinate demands upon them. They have never received due credit either from the National Government, or the country at large, for what they did in this respect during the first three-quarters of the last century. Instead of grateful acknowledgments they have had too often sneers and reproaches. Yet though they were not usually given even the encouragement of praise, they kept right on with the same spirit which in every national war has made the District contribute more than its quota of volunteers for the army and navy. Nothing is further from the truth than the hackneyed slander constantly repeated even to this day that the inhabitants of the District are "grasping office-holders without civic pride or national patriotism." The officials and employees of the National Government now, when there are more than ever before, are twenty-five thousand in number, or about one-twelfth of the population, and, since a large number of them are unmarried, they represent not more than seventy-five thousand people in their households, or in all less than one-third of the population. Moreover, they are exceptionally intelligent and well educated people, selected from among the best in the different States and Territories, representative of the cream of our people, with all the virtues characteristic of Americans. Drawn as they are chiefly from outside of

the great cities, they have more than the average of "civic pride and national patriotism." None but the ignorant or the malicious would bring such a railing accusation against them.

But the majority of the people of the District of Columbia are not in the service of the National Government. Many of them have lived there always, and all, like the men and women in the national service, represent the best elements in the citizenship of the whole country. Nowhere in the world is there a better body of citizens with more "civic pride and national patriotism," as the work they have done and the sacrifices they have made for the nation's city and the nation itself abundantly testify. In one respect they have the advantage over the people of any other place in the United States in that they are not cursed by the baneful interference of partisan politics in all their municipal affairs, so that they can well show civic pride as well as civic spirit.

In Jefferson's day the District of Columbia had no general executive government, nor was any given to it by Congress until 1871, when a full territorial form of government, with a Governor, a Legislature, and a Delegate in Congress, was provided for it. Congress, under the quaint phrase of the Constitution, has the power to "exercise exclusive legislation" over the Federal District, but cannot exercise executive authority. In 1801 it established a judiciary system for the District of Columbia. But for seventy years Washington was governed by a Mayor and Councils, and Georgetown by a Mayor and Councils, while the rest of the territory of the District (after Alexandria with its Mayor and Councils and Alexandria County with its county government had been retroceded to Virginia) had no other executive authority except the levy court. For the first decade the Mayor of Washington was appointed by the President of the United States. But after that, and always in

the case of the Mayors of Georgetown and Alexandria, these officers were elected by the qualified male voters. When the civil war broke out Congress set up a metropolitan police department for the whole District of Columbia.

But for a general District government, we are indebted to General Grant, whose victories had saved the national life and had insured the permanence of the National Capital. When he became President he took an interest in the development of the City of Washington and stoutly supported Alexander R. Shepherd, the remarkable young native of Washington who was ambitious to carry out the long-neglected plans of George Washington for magnificent streets and avenues. Through Grant's support and that of Congress, in which Shepherd's political friends then had the majority, and the assistance of other far-seeing and determined men, the territorial form of government was secured from Congress, and under its powers the plow of progress was driven in deep furrows along all the principal highways of the city. The Governors, first Henry D. Cooke and then Alexander R. Shepherd, were appointed by President Grant, together with a Board of Public Works, of which Shepherd was the leading spirit, and which did the actual work of improvement. The voters elected the Assembly, the Delegate to Congress and other officers, and by a majority approved the Shepherd policy. The cost of it was to be borne as the cost of all similar improvements on a smaller scale had been borne, by the people of Washington.

The work was done in such a way that it could not be undone all over the city, but hurriedly, and therefore roughly and expensively. There was the inevitable protest from many taxpayers who could not see its results for the burdens which it imposed upon them and who, at the same time, were alarmed by the possibilities of ill-effects from universal manhood suffrage in the National Capital. They appealed to Congress, where the political majority in the House was

changed, and, although rigid investigation found no fault in Governor Shepherd himself, the improvements were stopped, a change in the system of government was ordered, for the time being, until a permanent form of government could be carefully framed, a temporary Board of Commissioners was to exercise executive authority in the District, and Henry T. Blow, of Missouri, William Dennison, of Ohio, and John H. Ketcham, of New York, were appointed for that purpose.

Congress, in preparing the permanent form of government, took into account the long and just complaint that the National Government had neglected the National Capital, together with the protests against the continuance of the electoral franchise, which were strengthened by the evident impracticability of submitting the United States to the taxation of its property or to the appropriation of any of its funds by a vote of the District taxpayers. It became evident that if the United States was to share with the District taxpayers the municipal expenses it would have to exercise exclusively the power of taxation and the power of appropriation. A partnership between the United States and the District of Columbia was entered into on this basis and embodied in the Act of June, 1878, "to provide a permanent form of government," called by the United States Supreme Court the "Constitution of the District of Columbia."

This form of government has had twenty-five years of increasing and uninterrupted success. Under it not only the City of Washington, but the entire District of Columbia, has remarkably developed and advanced in every way. George Washington's plans for the Federal City have been largely carried out, and the principles of them have been applied to the surrounding territory of the District with its smaller towns and villages. Every visitor to Washington will testify to its increasing prosperity and beauty, and those

who have not seen it since the civil war days would hardly recognize it. In many respects it is now the most attractive capital in the world, and it will have recognized and unsurpassable preeminence in this regard before many years are passed. Foreigners coming to Washington now unite in such enthusiastic praise as contrasts sharply with what foreigners recorded of their impressions in the earlier days. All agree that a wonderful transformation has been wrought.

In this last quarter of a century the United States, besides erecting new and beautiful buildings of its own and assuming half of the obligation for the Shepherd improvements, has paid half of the municipal expenses of the District of Columbia, except those of the water department, which are paid entirely by the water takers, the National Government getting its water supply free. As the United States owns a little more than half of the land in the National Capital, its share ought to be at least a little more than half of the expenses. But half a loaf is so much better than no bread that the present arrangement was very acceptable to the District taxpayers.

Senator Hoar several years ago pointed out a more excellent way, however, suggesting that, in all equity, the National Government should bear all the expenses of the National Capital over and beyond the returns of what would be regarded as reasonable taxation anywhere else. Under this ideal plan the District taxpayers would contribute fair taxes, and whether they amounted to one-half or one-third of the amount needed the United States would bear the rest of the necessary expenditure. Senator Hoar believed that the great majority of the intelligent people of the United States would approve his plan. He recognized the new interest which the people of the country take in the National Capital and their desire to have it developed and embellished, which has been especially manifest since the celebration of the Centennial of the National Capital on December 12th,

1900 when, for twenty-four hours, the National Government took holiday and joined with the citizens of the District in a commemoration which furnished the only news from Washington that day and held the attention of the whole country. Every good American is proud of his country and proud of its capital, and wants to see the Capital in every way worthy of the power and glory of the country.

The surrender of the suffrage under the permanent form of government of the District of Columbia is generally satisfactory to its people, who realize that they are better off without partisan politics, since the municipal business is not affected by "bosses" or machines, corruption or blackmail, and is under the scrutiny and influence of a public opinion which cannot be deflected by political considerations. All the newspapers are independent, the taxpayers are organized into representative and powerful associations, and criticism and suggestions are quickly heeded by the public servants, who cannot fall back either upon a partisan press or a political machine for protection, but who have every incentive to administer their trust honestly and efficiently. "Justitia omnibus" is the District's motto and its government's rule. There are some District taxpayers who, for sentimental or other reasons, would like to have the suffrage restored in the District, but they know that they can never have universal suffrage there, and that it is extremely improbable that suffrage in any form would be given, even if its advocates could agree among themselves as to the limitations that ought to be imposed.

Congress is the legislature of the District of Columbia. Its executive government, under the Act of Congress of June, 1878, is a board of three Commissioners appointed by the President of the United States, two from civil life, always of opposite politics, and one an engineer officer of the Army of high rank, to whom the board intrusts the immediate direction of all engineering and construction work.

The Commissioners appoint practically all the other officers and employees of the District government, and all serve under the direction of the Commissioners. The Commissioners have power from Congress to enact municipal legislation in the form of health, police, building, and other regulations. They represent the District, before Congress, where the committees dealing with District affairs and making District appropriations confer with them as to all District measures, and in all business with foreign governments and municipalities, or the States, Territories and municipalities of the United States. The President submits to them all bills connected with the District which have passed Congress before he passes upon them.

Many of the best citizens of the District have served the public under the present form of government and it has had the cordial support of most of the others, who are accustomed to say that they have the best form of municipal government in the United States.

The national life has been and is faithfully reflected in the National Capital. It has been not only the scene of the greatest political transactions in our history since the year 1800, but the meeting place of all the States, the special home of the Flag, the center of national sentiment, with undivided and uninterrupted allegiance to the National Government. Every President except Washington has done his work in the White House. Every Congress since the Fifth has done its work in the Capitol. There, too, John Marshall, greatest Chief Justice, made the United States a "more perfect Union," a nation by the authority of his reasoning, and there all his successors have carried out his principles in the Supreme Court, the greatest tribunal in the world. There the great captains of our armies and navies have had their headquarters, and there the directors and scientists of all the governmental services have planned and wrought. The memories of the great dead and their great deeds are

everywhere there, and the greatest men of every State are on the roll of the residents of the District.

The Capital has grown with the growth of the country, which could be seen there as nowhere else. It has been always national, and at the same time cosmopolitan. It has never had any other flag than the Star and Stripes, or any other loyalty than to the United States. The national feeling in all its phases has been constantly manifested there. Although it has had the distinction of being the official home of the ambassadors and ministers of all foreign governments, the place where all our treaties have been signed and most of them negotiated, it has never been in any way under the domination of foreign influence. It has always been a typical American community of the best sort. It has known neither riots nor lynch law. It has raised to a higher power the patriotism of every American who has visited it, and has helped him to think continentally.

Almost in the center of the original District of Columbia stands the Washington Monument, an unadorned shaft of stone higher than any other in the world, symbolic not only of the life of George Washington, but of the city which he founded, rising far above the noise and dust, in strength and simplicity. From its windows, five hundred feet above the ground, one can see almost the entire District of Columbia without a glass. Athens or Rome was smaller when it ruled the world. But, although the District has more people than any of six of the States—Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada—and than any of the Territories, it is smaller than any other political division of the United States. The District does not stand for material riches, but it is rich in intellectual and spiritual wealth, in good government, good society, outward beauty and inward grace, noble memories, and glorious history. It stands, in strength and simplicity, for intellectual and spiritual achievement. Above the clamor of the market places and the whirl



of sensuous pleasures it reminds us constantly of men who were too busy to make money, too high minded to spend it sordidly, and who gave to their country what others give to themselves. Its voice summons the youth of the country with the irresistible call of duty to the unselfish life of patriotic endeavor.

The calm height of the Washington Monument is a good place from which to see things in proper proportion as with the serene eye of history. It is a place for optimism, not for pessimism. As we look westward up the picturesque Potomac, curving under the setting sunbeams, we remember that George Washington looked with the eye of faith from those heights to that promised land beyond the horizon, beyond the Alleghanies, which he wanted the United States to occupy, and we remember how, slowly but surely, in spite of all difficulties, the thought of that first great American expansionist has been carried out until American principles, represented by the American Flag, have been planted in the islands of the sea, in the uttermost parts of the earth, far beyond his farthest dream. Looking southward, towards his home and tomb at Mount Vernon, we recall how his ideals of republican freedom, his example as a Revolutionary patriot, brought a score of republics into being out of the monarchical possessions south of us, and how his teachings made the United States the protector and the friend of everyone of them without making the United States the enemy of any other country. As we turn to the eastern windows, looking out beyond the hills of Maryland towards the Atlantic Ocean, we see the living influence of Washington in the Republic of France, in the freedom which has spread through all western Europe, in the democracy and liberty of the British Isles. At The Hague, we see enthroned by the public opinion of civilized nations his teaching of international justice as the means of keeping the peace of the world—that doctrine which, by Washington's

direction, John Jay embodied in the famous treaty with England, then denounced, now admired, the first treaty in which that principle was found. Far to the northward we see our sister state of Canada, self-governing, American in all but form and name, revering Washington and living out his deepest teachings.

We can trace from this high point the way in which our own nation has been led, through the wrongs and the dangers that we have passed, even through the awful sufferings and sacrifices of the civil war, into larger opportunities, greater responsibilities, and a more splendid renown. It is a cure for discouragement to reflect at the top of the Washington Monument upon the progress of the nation of Washington under the inspiration of his principles and his career.

Even though clouds cover the zenith, even though rain falls from their darkness, the sun shining over Arlington Heights, where we can see the graves of men who died that the Republic might live, arches the Capitol with a splendid rainbow, the perpetual reminder of the promises of God. Taking the larger view of our country and its relation to the world, facing the new occasions and their new duties, appreciating that we have been brought into unique leadership among the nations and with alien peoples, adding to our unsettled questions at home even greater questions abroad, we see clouds of darkness over us, and even the rain falling upon us; but we also see shining through the rain the rays of the Sun of Righteousness turning the drops into the rainbow of the covenant of God, that those who obey shall be sustained, and we remember all the years of the right hand of the Most High. It is in this that our hope lies, as all our wisest men confess. Not by our might, not by our wisdom—no, “but my Spirit,” saith the God of our fathers. Without Him our efforts are but losing. With Him we may be sure of success.

At every call to arms the men of America have flocked to its standard and the women of America have sent them, all ready to give up everything for the Republic. It is harder to make this supreme sacrifice in time of peace than in time of war. But, under the inspiration of Washington, who served no less nobly in peace than in war, we may resolve to live for our country as readily as we would die for her, and to follow in the way of the Divine commandment, that she may have the largest life, the greatest glory and honor.

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